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ABSTRACT

This paper describes six specific techniques that speech communication students may use in rehearsals to improve memory, to increase delivery skills, and to reduce speech stress. The techniques are idea association, covert modeling, desensitization, language elaboration, overt modeling, and self-regulation. Recent research is reviewed that confirms the efficacy of the six methods, showing how they relate to either high or low levels of physiological arousal that are controlled by language processing in the left brain hemisphere or imagery processing in the right brain hemisphere. (RL)

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SIX REHEARSAL TECHNIQUES FOR THE PUBLIC SPEAKER: Improving Memory, Increasing Delivery Skills and Reducing Speech Stress

Six specific techniques are described that may be used in rehearsals to improve memory, to increase delivery skills and to reduce speech stress. Recent research is reviewed that confirms the efficacy of the six methods. Their effectiveness is shown to be related to either high or low levels of physiological arousal which are controlled by language processing of the left brain hemisphere or imagery processing of the right brain hemisphere.

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SIX REHEARSAL TECHNIQUES FOR THE PUBLIC SPEAKER: Improving Memory, Increasing Delivery Skills and Reducing Speech Stress

There are two key principles concerning rehearsing speeches that should be taught in every speech course: 1) one single pattern of rehearsal is insufficient to prepare a beginning speaker. Different rehearsal patterns exist which facilitate different aspects of speaking; some patterns help improve memory, other patterns improve delivery skills and still other patterns reduce speech stress. 2) Learning is facilitated by increasing or decreasing ones level of physiological arousal. Rehearsing permits a speaker to control his level of arousal and thereby control his learning.

This paper will a) review the recent research on memory, skill acquisition, and fear reduction, b) recommend two specific techniques for each of the three basic rehearsal types, and c) describe the relationship between the six rehearsal techniques in terms of levels of arousal.

Memory Rehearsal Techniques

Research indicates that overt activity is superior to internal processing for increasing memory. Specifically, Anderson[1] showed that students who verbalize out loud and visualize by drawing learn more than students who only internalize a task. Levonian[2] showed that when there is no arousal of emotion there is no memory and it is high arousal that creates long-term memory.

Crane[3] further showed that overt evaluation and speaking out loud were accompanied by higher arousal than listening, silent reading or writing. Therefore, memory is facilitated by both verbal and visual processes and particularly when they are externalized.

Next, we know from Elliott[4] that imagery is superior to rote repetition and high imagery words are recalled better than low imagery words. Postman[5] also confirmed that concrete words were acquired faster and retained longer than abstract words. Further evidence by Petersen[6] showed that the context of the imagery was even more powerful than the concreteness of images in producing recall. So we conclude that memory is facilitated by concrete imagery in a specific context.

More research relates to organizational principles. Ornstein[7] and Weist[8] have both shown that organized rehearsal is a necessary condition for organized recall. And Craik[9] showed that an "elaborative" type of rehearsal produces long-term memory while a "maintenance" type of rehearsal does not. Nelson[10] uses the phrase "multiple retrieval paths" to indicate variety of sequencing as opposed to rote practice (single retrieval path) and concludes that "multiple retrieval paths,

rather than interfering with each other, facilitate long-term retention. Our third major conclusion therefore, is memory is facilitated when words are in organized categories that permit elaboration and variety of sequencing.

This brief review of memory research is sufficient to show that two types of rehearsal; one which externalizes the visual mode and one which externalizes the verbal mode would be desirable. It also indicates that one technique should use concrete images in a context while another should elaborate and vary categories of organization. There already exists two traditional methods of rehearsal that fulfill these requirements and should therefore be taught with renewed emphasis to students. One I will label Idea Association and the other Language Elaboration to differentiate between them.

Idea Association

The standard approach is to create a mental image to represent each idea in your speech and place it in a familiar context; rooms of a house, a train station, etc. A practical application of this approach to public speaking would be to use the walls of the room in which you will be speaking as your context to hold the images.

Briefly, you would take each major idea on your

speech outline and imagine a pictorial representation that would be particularly vivid in depicting your thought. You would then mentally place the image for your first idea on the side wall to your left (since we read from left to right) as you stand at the speaker's rostrum. Your second image associated with your second idea would be assigned to the far back wall directly in front of you; the third idea would be located in visual imagery on the wall to your right side and a fourth representation of an idea could be put on the wall behind you. If you had a fifth and sixth idea on your outline they could be placed on the ceiling and the floor respectively.

Probably most speeches could be taken care of by the six surfaces of a room, but a longer speech with more ideas could be accomodated by dividing each surface in half or thirds which would double or triple the available locations for imagery placement.

The more concrete the images the better and even drawing the image on your outline would help during rehearsal. This technique has dramatic results and if properly rehearsed the student will be able to deliver his speech without an outline or written notes.

Language Elaboration

Another familiar memory technique is designed to help speakers learn at the level of concepts rather

than rote memorization of words which can be disastrous if one word is forgotten. The secret is to go through the speech several times without using the same language twice.

The first time through it doesn't matter what words you use for each idea or illustration. But the next time through try to use other words. Another time vary the phrases, use shorter ones or longer ones. With another repetition try colorful expressions and then another time exact precision in statements. You set up a different pattern that you use for the entire speech each time through. You force yourself to find synonyms for different words or ideas.

You will not be able to go rapidly through the speech using this procedure but you do not improve memory by how fast you go or by the number of repetitions; you remember because of the richness of the associations and structure. Now you are not tied to one particular way of saying an idea which helps you avoid the booby-trap of forgetting a word and not being able to continue. Remember to rehearse out loud and you will find that this technique is extremely effective in facilitating memory.

Delivery Rehearsal Techniques

In this category two rehearsal procedures will be discussed which are generally referred to in the

experimental literature as covert and overt modeling.

Bandura[11] found in his research that modeling is superior to desensitization although Mann and Rosenthal[12] did not. Fremow[13] found that covert modeling (watching others perform skills) brought significant speech fear reduction as well as overt modeling (coached practice in skills).

These types of procedures are also taught under the label assertiveness training and according to Morgan[14] students who score less assertive on the Rathus Assertiveness Schedule[15] also score more socially fearful on items like: Being criticized, Being self-conscious, Failure, Feeling disapproved of, Looking foolish and Making mistakes which would be similar to public speaking fears.

Modeling techniques will be recognized by speech teachers as regular activities in a speech class and research on modeling is confirming research showing improvement from taking a speech course.

Covert Modeling

This essentially is the mental selection and construction of a delivery model the speaker plans to implement. He observes other speakers and notes what they do well and what behavior detracts from their message. The process of evaluating other speakers is

covert modeling in that it helps the observer sort out desirable behavior to emulate.

In anticipation of his own performance a speaker notes positive models of voice characteristics, movement and gesture, use of audio-visual aids or memory aids, etc. He pictures himself duplicating some of the modeled behavior, and builds a mental buleprint of his delivery goals.

Overt Modeling

This comprises what others might call role playing, practice or assertiveness training. It would include private practice delivering a speech, speaking before a friend or roommate and finally speaking in front of a speech class. After all, speaking in a class is a laboratory setting and could be considered rehearsal of techniques which will be used in a non-educational context.

Overt modeling might include coaching or evaluation by others and it is designed to be a less threatening situation where the speaker's behavior repetory can be extended and practiced. Important also is the attitude which accompanies the role behavior. The attitudes of assertive behavior as described by Baer fit easily into the speech course.

> The truly assertive person possesses four characteristics:
> 1. She feels free to reveal herself. Through words and actions she makes the statement, "This is what I feel, think and want".

> 2. She can communicate with people on all levels; with strangers, friends, family. This communication is always open, direct, honest and appropriate.
> 3. She has an active orientation to life. She goes after what she wants. In contrast to the passive person who waits for things to happen, she makes things happen.
> 4. She acts in a way she herself respects. Aware that she cannot always win, she accepts her limitations. However, she always strives to make a good try so that win lose or draw she maintains her self-respect.[16]

It is not necessary to detail all the procedures which are used to teach speaking skills; suffice it to say that delivering speeches in class is overt modeling.

Confidence Rehearsal Techniques

Two techniques will be discussed, one called desensitization which has been described in the Speech-Communication literature and one called self-regulation which has not. Desensitization has been shown to be an effective method of fear reduction by Paul[17] McCrosky[18] and many others. It is a combination of relaxation training and imagining scenes which progressively lead up to the imagined speaking situation. Self-regulation is a procedure of self-control[19] that involves a relabeling of speech stress symptoms and self instructions.[20]

Desensitization

The first thing you must master is the art of relaxation and then you must maintain the relaxation while you picture yourself in different situations

that progressively approach and finally lead to the delivery of your speech before your audience.

Relaxation

Relaxation is facilitated by following these steps:

1. Find a time and place where you will not be disturbed.
2. Sit in a comfortable chair that gives support to your head and arms and extend your legs or lie down.
3. Close your eyes, take a couple of deep breaths and let the air out slowly.
4. Muscles relax more deeply after first being tensed, so tense your right arm and fist for approximately 5 seconds and then let your arm drop and feel the relaxation of the muscles.
5. Tense the muscles of your left arm and hand (5 sec.) and let them relax.
6. Tense the muscles of your face and throat and then relax them.
7. Tense the muscles of your chest, back and stomach, then relax.
8. Tense your right leg and foot, then relax.
9. Tense your left leg and foot, then relax.

You now know how to obtain a deeply relaxed state and are ready to begin the counter-conditioning. A series of images will be used that will take you from a period two weeks before your speech until you deliver your speech.

Images

0 Picture yourself sitting in your room, 2 weeks before your speech is due, completely relaxed.

1 Picture yourself in your room, 2 weeks before your speech is due, with no tension practicing your speech.

2 Picture yourself in your speech class, 2 weeks before your speech is due, completely relaxed listening to students giving their speeches.

3 Picture yourself in your room, 1 week before your speech is due, with no tension practicing your speech.

4 Picture yourself in your speech class, 1 week before your speech is due, completely relaxed listening to students giving their speeches.

5 Picture yourself in your room, on the day before you speak, with no tension practicing your speech.

6 Picture yourself in your room, the day that you will speak, with no tension getting ready to go to class.

7 Picture yourself walking to your speech class, with no tension, walking into the room and taking your seat.

8 Picture yourself listening to the speakers completely relaxed.

9 Nour name is called, you walk to the front of the room with no tension.

10 You turn around and without any tension begin to speak.

Counter-conditioning

The basic procedure is to begin by relaxing fully as described previously and then picture in your mind the zero state or image that should arouse no tension at all. Then you picture the first image and mentally check the major muscle groups of your body to see if any tension is present. If tension arises then you

immediately stop the mental image and return to a relaxed state.

After you have remained relaxed for a few seconds then you repeat the first image again and hold it to see if any tension occurs. If this time you do not detect any tension in your muscles then you stop that image and picture the second image in your mind and note if any tension arises.

Any time tension is felt you stop the mental picture and return to a completely relaxed state. You may only be able to progress to the second or third image in your first session, but each time you practice desensitization you must begin again at zero and see how far you can go without arousing any tension.

You are conditioning a set of "no tension" to each of the images. When you have been able to picture yourself speaking to your class (image 10) without any muscular tension you will find that it will carry over into your actual delivery. You will feel much less tension as you deliver your speech. The more practice, of course, the better the results.

The best conditions for practicing desensitization would be with your teacher, a teaching assistant or other individual familiar with the process leading you through the steps. The procedure may, however, be followed by listening to a tape recording, asking your roommate to give you the directions or participating

in a group that practices the technique. Once you are familiar with the steps you can do it by yourself, but if you meet with a group of students to do it with them there is more motivation to keep practicing.

In a group setting as soon as one person feels tension that individual opens his eyes, sits up and pulls out of the procedure. As soon as everyone has stopped you can all go back and start again.

Self-Regulation

Goldfried[21] has shown a significant correlation between the irrational beliefs listed by Ellis[22] and public speaking anxiety. Self-regulation changes any negative statements and/or interprepations of physical arousal when facing stress. The procedure also trains the speaker to deliberately employ the methods while in a stressful situation.

> ...while systematic desensitization is often considered to influence the relationships between fear cues and the immediate anxiety reactions, recent developments suggest that the therapist should train the client to relax himself when confronted by the feared situation and to modify his self-verbalizations to promote more effective coping strategies.[23]

The procedure consists of three steps.

> The first step in the change process is the client's becoming an observer of his own behavior.[24]

> ...then what he now says to himself, and/or imagines, must initiate a new behavioral chain, one which is incompatible with his maladaptive behaviors.[25]

> The third step in the change process, what the client says to himself about his newly acquired behaviors, determines whether the behavioral change will be maintained and will generalize.[26]

Self-regulation was tested by Goldfried[27] in comparison to desensitization and a discussion group (attention-placebo). The students in the self-regulation treatment group showed significant reduction in fear on all measures. Desensitization also produced significant reduction of fear and there was no significant difference between the two which indicates that self-regulation is as effective as desensitization.

Meichenbaum[28] also compared the two techniques although he used the label "group insight". The insight group was to a) become aware of negative self-verbalizations they produced in stress situations, b) emit incompatible self-verbalizations of a positive nature, and c) behave in accordance with the new self-instructions. This is a self-regulatory procedure. And the results indicate that the insight group was as effective as the desensitization group in significantly reducing speech anxiety over behavioral, cognitive and self-report measures. It appears therefore, that the two procedures, desensitization and self-regulation are both effective in reducing speech stress. Following is a suggested procedure for using this technique in speech classes.

Stage 1 Self-Observation. Instruct the audience to remain passive. They may practice desensitization with their eyes open, if they choose. The student receiving treatment stands in front of the audience. The teacher stands to the side of the student and speaks so that only the student hears. The student replies so that only the teacher hears.

1. I'm going to ask you to describe your physical sensations as you look at the audience. Do not exaggerate or use stereotyped words like "butterflies"; be precise.

2. Note your legs, do you feel any tremor, any tension?

3. Note any sensations that are in your solar-plexus.

4. Note your arms and hands, is there any tension, any tremor?

5. Note your breathing, are you short of breath? If so, take a deep breath.

6. Note your heart rate, indicate the rate by keeping time with your hand.

7. Note your lips, mouth and throat; are they dry or moist?

8. Note your body temperature; does it differ from normal?

9. Describe any thoughts that you have had while we have been talking.

10. Describe precisely how the audience appears to you.

(The teacher could insert instructions to tense and relax major muscle groups at this point, if desired)

Stage 2 Teacher-Talk. The student listens carefully, accepting each thought. He should not disagree or elaborate, but dwell on the thought. One way to do this is to concentrate on each word that is said. The sentence spoken could even be repeated mentally in the first person a couple of times.

1. The tension you feel in the muscles of your body is there so that you may move easily while in front of the audience. Your gestures need to be somewhat larger when if front of an audience. You have no more tension in your limbs than what is necessary for you to walk and gesture effectively.

2. Speaking to an audience is a naturally exciting experience. You are fortunate to have the opportunity to speak to them. You have no more emotional arousal than is necessary and desirable for you to speak so that you can be heard by everyone and clearly express yourself.

3. Your alertness allows you to observe accurately the responses of the individuals in the audience. You are able to note expressions on their faces indicating agreement, thoughtfulness, pleasure and other feelings. The energy you feel makes you more perceptive and more responsive.

4. The audience is very relaxed and your vitality, enthusiasm and energy holds their attention, keeps their interest and stimulates their thoughts. You help them to get excited about what you are saying.

5. You will be pleased after you have finished speaking because you made the effort to communicate to an audience. You have earned the right to be proud of your attempt to share your thinking with others. Your energy was well spent. It was worth your time to have this experience.

Stage 3 Self-Talk. The teacher asks the student to evaluate, assess and explain his judgments.

1. Tell me about any physiological sensations that you are experiencing and whether they are minor, average or strong.

2. What does your physical arousal permit you to do? (The student should express the same kind of thoughts contained in Teacher-Talk)

3. Describe how you will begin your speech. Include how you will walk to the front, how you will stand, where your hands will be, how your voice will sound, how you will look at the audience and what words you will use to begin your speech.

Once this procedure is learned the student can use the important elements in the minutes immediately prior to speaking. He can a) survey his sensations, b) accept them as necessary and desirable, and c) verbalize to himself how his increased energy may increase his effectiveness. He no longer tries to block or stop his emotion.

He does not tense up to control his behavior by fighting his emotions nor does he have the feeling that he has lost control, rather he is exercising control indirectly and confidently.

Techniques not Recommended

Implosion (sometimes called aversive therapy) and Flooding are similar techniques which call for extremely high arousal of emotion. Implosion includes imagining scenes which go beyond reality and provoke excessive stress while flooding consists of imagining the actual stress situation. These procedures have been shown to be effective, but they require considerable professional skill and under some circumstances will increase fear.

> Flooding may be harmful...under conditions in which patients do not receive exposure of sufficiently long duration.[29]

Psycho-drama involves enactment of situations that have been stressful; use of a director, double and other characters to help reveal the dynamics of the interactions and helping the individual to achieve insight into his experiences. This method is best suited to interpersonal situations that involve only a few people. It does not apply directly to public speaking situations.

Schroeder[30] and Zeisset[31] claim that relaxation alone is as effective as desensitization. However, their subjects were instructed to use the procedure when they faced threat. So it appears that relaxation in their studies was used as a self-regulation technique. Relaxation to be helpful must be combined with other methods as in desensitization or used as

a coping technique.

Arousal Relationships in Learning

Benson[32] has shown that you will remember better if you practice the night before rather than in the morning of the day you are to speak. A morning rehearsal will produce better memory 24 hours later, but not 8 hours after. This agrees with Levonian's[33] finding that learning under low arousal conditions facilitates short-term memory, but long-term recall is facilitated by high arousal. Another type of confirmation came from Sheehan[34] who found that arousal of imagery is facilitated by the occurrence of a conflict in consciousness, even when abstract material is being learned. The conflict would obviously increase arousal and that would facilitate memory. It is clear that memory processes are correlated with arousal levels.

It is interesting that both covert and overt modeling techniques have been found effective because covert procedures are extremely passive (watching films or demonstrations by others) while overt procedures try to duplicate as much as possible the actual stress of real life situations.

> The potency of modeling procedures...derives largely from the fact that clients learn and practice effective modes of behavior under conditions that are similar to those they face in their regular environment.[35]

It is fair to say that one method is conducted under conditions of low arousal and the other under high arousal.

Other therapeutic procedures for reducing fear or other emotional disturbances have historically manipulated the level of arousal of the individual. Sometimes the arousal was heightened

as in a crisis-abreaction-catharsis type approach and sometimes techniques were used which lowered arousal levels as in a relaxation-hypnotic-placebo type approach. See table 1.

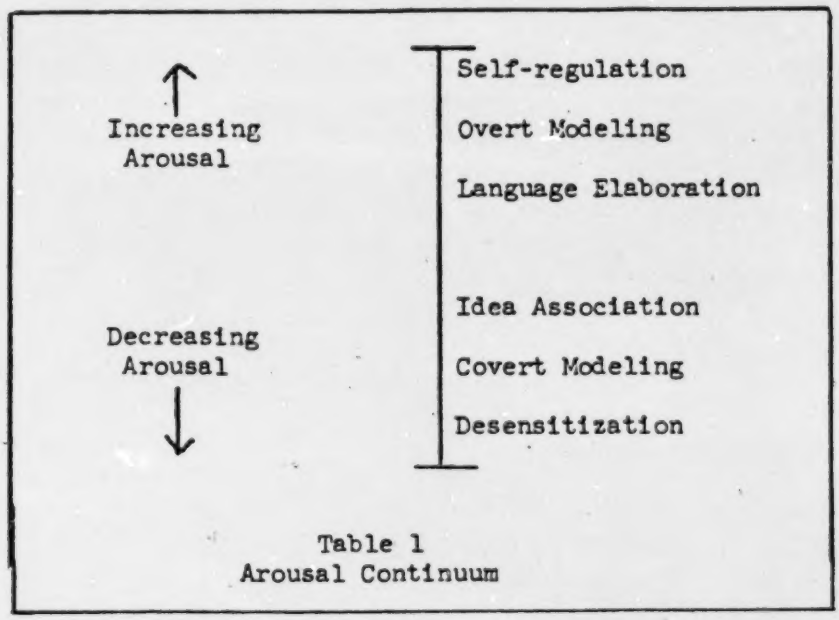

Table 1
Arousal Continuum

The idea association technique would be carried out when the student was very relaxed physically and mentally concentrating. Language elaboration is intended to be an active process wherein the student talks out loud with some display of energy.

Covert modeling is a passive process at a low level of arousal. Overt modeling, in contrast, should be an exercise in exaggeration, accentuating gestures and vocal variety. This dynamic performance in private is toned down for delivery in public, but much of its value will be lost if it does not generate a high level of arousal.

Desensitization is of course conducted under conditions of extreme relaxation. While self-regulation applied in the actual

situation will be a coping mechanism dealing with stress.

In addition to being aware that learning and behavior change occur at both high and low levels of arousal, it is important to know that each involves a different process located in different parts of the brain. The left hemisphere of the brain regulates abstract language processes and functions at a high level of arousal. Certain kinds of learning are aided by language, but other kinds are prevented.

> The evidence would seem to point to the existence of phenomena known as defense mechansisms, resistances, and mental blocks, which can distort, hinder, or prevent the assimilation of certain types of information presented during the alert, waking state. The research results would also suggest that these phenomena are rendered less effective as arousal level declines.[36]

> Perhaps the decrease in critical, analytical, logical linear-functioning that occurs with a lowering arousal level is the gradual, functional disabling of the major hemisphere. We might also speculate that the minor hemisphere is not as quickly disabled as is the major with decreasing arousal. Thus at the point where the major hemisphere ceases to process effectively incoming (or outgoing) information, the minor hemisphere can still do so in its own holistic manner.[37]

The right hemisphere, however, processes concrete imagery rather than linguistic patterns. What this means to the student is that left hemisphere learning is controlled by language and occurs at a high level of arousal, while right hemisphere learning is controlled by imagery and occurs at a low level of arousal.

This is why for each of the three major types of rehearsal I have recommended two techniques; one which employs imagery and is conducted under relaxed conditions and another type which

employs language and is used under conditions of high arousal. See table 2.

	IMAGERY	LANGUAGE
Memory Rehearsal	Idea Association	Language Elaboration
Delivery Rehearsal	Covert Modeling	Overt Modeling
Confidence Rehearsal	Desensi-tization	Self-Regulation

Table 2
Six Rehearsal Techniques

The idea association technique creates images for each idea in a speech. Language elaboration creates variety in language structure. Covert modeling consists of empathizing with expert behavior and mentally visualizing yourself performing the same behavior. Overt modeling demands that you act out and verbalize your entire speech. Desensitization requires that you match a relaxed condition with mental images of yourself preparing and speaking. And self-regulation involves giving verbal instructions to yourself when facing stress.

These techniques will insure both left and right hemisphere learning giving the student maximum flexibility and readiness at the time of delivery.

Conclusions

1. Speech teachers should inform students that there are several types of rehearsal patterns that can be beneficial to them.

2. There are at least two different techniques to improve memory that have been shown to be effective by past experience and confirmed by recent research.

3. There are at least two different techniques to improve delivery skills that are inherent in speech course structures and have been found to be effective by recent research.

4. There are at least two different techniques to reduce speech stress that have been shown to be effective by recent research.

5. Rehearsal under different conditions of emotional arousal is an important determinant of learning.

6. All six techniques are recommended for beginning speech students.

7. As an individual gains confidence, acquires delivery skills and improves his memory skills the amount of time spent in rehearsal and the number of different techniques will naturally decrease.

FOOTNOTES

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